

*Music and Political Imaginaries  
in 1930s Europe*

International Peripatetic Seminar



## Crisis: Laughter/Denunciation in Music

15-16 May 2025, University of Fribourg (Switzerland)

*Call for Papers*

### Context: The Research Group

Since 2023, the research group *Musique et imaginaires politiques en Europe dans les années 1930 / Music and Political Imaginaries in 1930s Europe* has been organizing an international seminar aimed at exploring the interactions between music and political imaginaries in the 1930s.

This peripatetic seminar, with initial sessions held in [Paris](#) (2023), at the [Abbaye de Royaumont](#) (2023), and Leeds (2024), investigates how music contributed to shaping, reflecting, and commenting on political imaginaries on multiple levels. The focus goes beyond the study of government music policies, whether totalitarian or not (e.g., the Popular Front in France). This exploration of imaginaries encompasses several themes, including:

- Music and discourses on music as vehicles for different forms of identity (left/right, national/international, European).
- The relationships between terminology used for musical language and political ideas (revolution/reaction, degeneration/utility, freedom of expression/imposed aesthetics).
- The role of music in the (re)definition of relations with others (colonization, Americanization, social classes, genders).
- Music as a witness to historical events and societal changes (attitudes towards work, women's emancipation).

In this regard, the 1930s provide a remarkably fertile laboratory: a period where national political differences tend to be exacerbated, notably due to the establishment of totalitarian regimes, while several issues (combatting the rise of fascism, workers' struggles) have international dimensions that transcend borders.

### Central Theme of the Colloquium

One of these transnational themes, on which the Fribourg instalment of this itinerant seminar will concentrate, is **crisis**: *economic crisis* and *political crisis* (challenges to representative democracy, the rise of fascist regimes), with tangible consequences on daily life (migrations, insecurity, racism, and intolerance) that reverberate in discourses.

How does the musical world in different European countries react to, and express, crisis? Considerations of these questions may address one or more of the following aspects (non-exhaustive list):

a) Denouncing the Crisis

- Construction of a crisis imaginary that has concrete repercussions on musical life.
- Shaping of a crisis imaginary through works that thematize it.
- Political use of music to fuel the crisis imaginary.
- Discourse on the “crisis of musical language” in connection with the political and economic crisis.

b) Laughing at the Crisis

- Organization of a musical life conceived as a diversion from the crisis.
- Invocation of the (supposedly) apolitical power of music as an escape.
- Cathartic music compositions allowing laughter at the crisis.

**Interdisciplinary studies** resulting from collaborations between specialists are particularly encouraged:

- Musicology and social or economic history.
- Musicology and art history.
- Musicology and literary history.
- Musicology and media studies.
- Musicology and theatre/film history.

**General Guidelines**

- Languages of presentations: French, English, German.
- Language of visual aids (slides or other): English.
- Duration of presentations: 20 minutes (standard presentation) / 30 minutes (interdisciplinary presentation by multiple contributors).
- Submission of proposals: [online form](#) (250-word abstract + biographical note).
- Submission deadline: **2 September 2024**.

**Colloquium Organizers**

Federico LAZZARO, University of Fribourg ([federico.lazzaro@unifr.ch](mailto:federico.lazzaro@unifr.ch))

Christopher MOORE, University of Ottawa ([christopher.moore@uottawa.ca](mailto:christopher.moore@uottawa.ca))

**Scientific Committee**

*Members of the Research Group:*

Michel DUCHESNEAU, Université de Montréal  
Anaïs FLÉCHET, Université Paris-Saclay  
Martin GUERPIN, Université d'Évry  
Philippe GUMLOWICZ, Université d'Évry  
Barbara KELLY, University of Leeds  
Fritz TRÜMPI, mdw – University of music and performing arts Vienna

*Invited Experts:*

Marie-Hélène BENOIT-OTIS, Université de Montréal (Chaire de recherche du Canada en musique et politique)  
Claude HAUSER, University of Fribourg